

A vital record of another part of America's past.

—*St. Paul Pioneer Press*

Rosa Cavalleri [is] a gifted storyteller."  
—*Library Journal*

This is the life story of Rosa Cavalleri, an Italian woman who came to the United States in 1884, one of the peak years in the nineteenth-century wave of immigration. A vivid, richly detailed account, the narrative traces Rosa's life in an Italian peasant village and later in Chicago. Marie Hall Ets, a social worker and friend of Rosa's at the Chicago Commons settlement house during the years following World War I, meticulously wrote down her lively stories to create this book.

Rosa was born in a silk-making village in Lombardy, a major source of north Italian emigration; she first set foot in the United States at the Castle Garden immigrant depot on the tip of Manhattan. Her life in this country was hard and Ets chronicles it in eloquent detail—Rosa endures a marriage at sixteen to an abusive older man, an unwilling migration to a Missouri mining town, and the unassisted birth of a child, and manages to escape from a husband who tried to force her into prostitution.

Rosa's exuberant personality, remarkable spirit, and ability as a storyteller distinguish this book, a unique contribution to the annals of U.S. immigration.


Marie Hall Ets (1895–1984) won a Caldecott Medal for the book *Nine Days to Christmas*.

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William L. Andrews, General Editor

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Ets

## Rosa: The Life of an Italian Immigrant

 WISCONSIN

# Rosa

The Life  
of an  
Italian  
Immigrant

Marie Hall Ets

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When Santino came home he was drunk and so mad that I had danced with Pio that he said he would kill me. He pulled me out of the bed and threw me on the floor.

Other nights when Santino was drunk and beating me Mamma Lena had sat up in her bed and watched, but she had said nothing. This night — I guess she could see it that he wanted to kill me for sure — she jumped up and came over and stopped him. She pulled him away so he couldn't reach to kick me. When she did that he started fighting with her. He should have known better than to try to fight Mamma Lena! Mamma Lena was so mad she didn't care what she did. She wasn't afraid of hurting him or anything. And in the end she put him out the door and he went rolling down the steps. "And don't ever come back to this house!" she yelled after him. "Don't ever come back! I never want to see you again!"

Before he married me that man was always talking sweet to Mamma Lena to make her like him. But after the marriage she could see it herself — how bad he was. He was all the time drunk and beating me, and she didn't like him herself.

A few weeks after the fight — Santino was not living in Mamma Lena's — one of those agents from the big bosses in America came to Bugiaro to get men for some iron mines in Missouri. The company paid for the tickets, but the men had to work for about a year to pay them back, and they had to work another year before they could send for their wives and families. So this time when that agent came Santino and some of his friends joined the gang and went off to America. He didn't even come back to the *osteria* to get his clothes.

When I heard that Santino was gone, oh, I was happy! I was thinking that probably I would never see that man again. America was a long way off.

Mamma Lena was better to me now and gave me more to eat. And I kept getting bigger and bigger. And then one day I felt kicking inside of me and I knew it was a baby. How that baby got in there I couldn't understand. But the thing that worried me most was how it was going to get out! A baby couldn't make a hole and come out like the moth in a cocoon. Probably the doctor would have to cut me. I didn't want to ask Mamma Lena, but what was I going to do? That

ONE night a few months after the marriage when I came from my work Santino said we were going to the dance hall. I was tired and kind of sick. "Why do you want to go when you don't know to dance?" I asked him. He didn't like it that I asked him why and he didn't answer. Mamma Lena was brushing crumbs from the table to the chickens. She was listening but she said nothing either. So I knew I would have to go. I ate the black bread and cabbage soup that Mamma Lena gave me for my supper, then I washed, put on my sailor dress and leather shoes, and we went.

Santino didn't try dancing himself — he knew he couldn't. But he told me to dance with his friends — a lot of men that were there. He wanted to show them how I could dance. I didn't know those men, but I did like he said — I tried to dance with them. But those men didn't know how at all. It was impossible to dance with them! So I sat down at the side and Santino and his friends sat at the table drinking.

After a little while Pio, the son of the *portinaia* at the mill, came in. I knew Pio when he was a little boy. He was an old friend to me and he was a wonderful dancer. So when Pio asked me to dance with him I was glad. And we danced the whole evening. Then because I was feeling so sick and tired I went home by myself and went to bed.

baby was kicking to get out — I would have to ask someone. So I told her.

"Well," said Mamma Lena. "You'll have to pray the Madonna. If you pray the Madonna with all your heart maybe the Madonna will make a miracle for you and let the baby come out without the doctor cutting you."

And so I started to pray for that miracle. I prayed to the little statue Madonna over the chicken coop and I prayed to the big Madonna in the church. And every night I gave myself more Ave Marias to say, so that when I woke up in the morning I would find the baby there in the bed beside me. But it never was. It was still inside and kicking.

At last there came a day when I had to leave my work and go home. After that I didn't know what happened. I was three days without my senses. Mamma Lena got two doctors — she got the village doctor, then she got the doctor she had to pay. But both doctors said the same. They said the baby could not be born — that they would have to take it in pieces. And they were even scolding her. They said, "How can a girl make new bones when her own bones are not finished growing? The girl is too young!" Mamma Lena was in despair. She wanted that baby. So she told the doctors to go and she ran to the church and prayed to the big Madonna. She told the Madonna that if She would let that baby be born alive she would give Her that beautiful shawl that Remo and me won in the dance. (As soon as Mamma Lena had found out about the prize shawl she had made Zia Teresa bring it to her. And she would not speak to Zia Teresa for about three weeks because she said Zia Teresa had helped me deceive her.)

And right then when she was praying, my baby was born — a nice little boy. She came home and she could hear it crying. Think what a miracle! Two doctors said that baby couldn't be born! For a long time she didn't know whether I was going to live or not, but she was so happy to have that baby that she was thanking the Madonna. She took the shawl to the priest the next day. And that shawl made so much money in the raffle that the Madonna got all new paint and a new sky and new stars behind Her.

In the fever that followed the birth of my baby I lost my hair

and my voice. Little by little my hair came back, and my voice to speak came back too, but I could never sing like before. And as soon as I could walk again I went back to my work in the mill. They had a special room in the mill just for nursing the babies. So Mamma Lena would bring the baby to me and I would stop work and go in there and nurse him. And I nursed him at lunchtime too.

Not long after the baby was born Mamma Lena got five little coral horns one day from another lady and tied them on a string around his neck. She said she didn't want anyone to witch that baby with the evil eye and make him sick. I told her I didn't believe in those things. I said, "Only God and the Madonna make you sick and make you well. How can people make you sick!" She didn't scold. She said it was good that I believed only in God and the Madonna. But she kept those horns around the baby's neck anyway. How could anyone witch that baby with the evil eye when the Madonna made a miracle to let him be born? I guess Mamma Lena remembered Braco and she didn't want to take any chance.

There used to be a lot of men, and women too, in the villages of Lombardy that the people called witches — *maliardi*. The people thought those men and women had the evil eye. In this country too some of the old people believe in the evil eye. When my Visella got the heart trouble and died some of the women were saying it was the evil eye. I said no. I said God wanted her, that was all. But that Braco, I remember him myself. He was all the time singing. But then one day someone witched him and he couldn't talk and he couldn't sing. He was *muoto*. Three years he couldn't talk and he couldn't sing. After three years a man appeared and said, "Braco, you're going to sing and you're going to talk again." And when Braco tried, he could! He could sing and he could talk! As quick as he could Braco grabbed a big knife and started after that man to catch him. Braco ran all through the town trying to catch that *maliardo* to kill him. But he never saw him again. That man disappeared entirely. No one knew where he came from or where he went. (Nobody can witch me, though. I'm too strong in believing in God and the Madonna.)

So I was around fifteen years old and I had to be like an old woman. I was not allowed to walk with the young people when they

went to the square on Christmas Eve or dance with the masks when they came to the stables in the time of the carnival. I couldn't even sit with the other young girls at lunchtime at the mill. But as I got strong again I began imitating funny people and telling stories again to make the women and girls all laugh. And nighttimes and Sundays I had my baby, my Francesco, to give me joy and make me laugh. And now that I was married Mamma Lena no longer scolded or beat me like before.

"But you did wrong to make that beautiful young girl marry a man like Santino!" Zia Teresa would say.

"Yes, I made a mistake," Mamma Lena would say. "But it was not my fault. I didn't know before how bad he was. And now Rosa is married and has her baby and I don't have to worry anymore."

My Francesco had learned to walk and was learning to talk when here, coming into the *osteria* one Sunday, were some of those men who had gone to America with Santino. I stopped playing with my baby and went and called Mamma Lena from the wine cellar.

"Those men in the iron mines in Missouri need women to do the cooking and washing," said one of the men. "Three men have sent back for their wives, and two for some girls to marry. Santino says for you to send Rosa. He sent the money and the ticket." And the man pulled them from an inside pocket and laid them on the table. Then all four sat down and ordered wine and polenta. Mamma Lena took the ticket and the money and put them in the pocket of her underskirt, and without a word started serving them.

When the men were ready to leave the one who had brought the message spoke again. "In two weeks another gang of men from the villages is leaving for the iron mines in Missouri. Your daughter and the other wives and girls can go with them." But still Mamma Lena didn't tell him if I was going or not going.

After they were gone I helped her clear the table and wash the dishes. Then I took Francesco in my arms and waited for her to speak. She took her rag and started to wipe the table, but instead of wiping it she sat down on the bench beside it.

"Yes, Rosa," she said. "You must go. However bad that man is, he is your husband — he has the right to command you. It would be

a sin against God not to obey. You must go. But not Francesco. He didn't ask for Francesco and I would be too lonesome without him."

Me, I was even wanting to sin against God and the Madonna before I would leave my baby and go off to Santino in America! But Mamma Lena said I must go. There was nothing I could do.

Mamma Lena was good to me though. She thought I would be not so lonesome — not so homesick in America — if I had the oil like the poor always had in Bugiarro. So she made me three bottles full and sealed it up so it looked like wine. That oil is made from the seed of the mustard plant — mustard or turnip? — I don't know what it's called in English. You eat the part underground but it's not pinchy like radishes. Only the rich people in the cities in Italy can have the olive oil. We poor people used that oil that the women made themselves.

And so I had to leave Mamma Lena and my baby and go off with that gang of men and one or two women to America.

THE day came when we had to go and everyone was in the square saying good-bye. I had my Francesco in my arms. I was kissing his lips and kissing his cheeks and kissing his eyes. Maybe I would never see him again! It wasn't fair! He was *my* baby! Why should Mamma Lena keep him? But then Pep was calling and Mamma Lena took Francesco away and Zia Teresa was helping me onto the bus and handing up the bundles.

"But Rosa, don't be so sad!" It was the other Rosa and Zia Maria in the station in Milan, kissing me good-bye and patting my shoulder. "It is wonderful to go to America even if you don't want to go to Santino. You will get smart in America. And in America you will not be so poor."

Then Paris and we were being crowded into a train for Havre. We were so crowded we couldn't move, but my *paesani* were just laughing. "Who cares?" they laughed. "On our way to America! On our way to be millionaires!"

Day after day in Havre we were leaving the lodging house and standing down on the docks waiting for a ship to take us. But always the ship was full before it came our turn. "O Madonna!" I prayed. "Don't ever let there be room! Don't ever let there be room!"

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But here, on the sixth day we came on. We were almost the last ones. There was just one young French girl after us. She was with her mother and her sister, but when the mother and sister tried to follow, that *marinero* at the gate said, "No more! Come on the next boat!" And that poor family was screaming and crying. But the *marinero* wouldn't let the girl off and wouldn't let the mother and sister on. He said, "You'll meet in New York. Meet in New York."

All us poor people had to go down through a hole to the bottom of the ship. There was a big dark room down there with rows of wooden shelves all around where we were going to sleep — the Italian, the German, the Polish, the Swede, the French — every kind. And in that time the third class on the boat was not like now. The girls and women and the men had to sleep all together in the same room. The men and girls had to sleep even in the same bed with only those little half-boards up between to keep us from rolling together. But I was lucky. I had two girls sleeping next to me. When the dinner bell rang we were all standing in line holding the tin plates we had to buy in Havre, waiting for soup and bread.

"Oh, I'm so scared!" Emilia kept saying and she kept looking at the little picture she carried in her blouse. "I'm so scared!"

"Don't be scared, Emilia," I told her. "That young man looks nice in his picture."

"But I don't know him," she said. "I was only seven years old when he went away."

"Look at *me*," said the comical Francesca with her crooked teeth. "I'm going to marry a man I've never seen in my life. And he's not *Lombardo* — he's *Toscato*. But I'm not afraid."

Of course Francesca was not afraid. "Crazy Francesca" they called her at the silk mill. She was so happy she was going to America and going to get married that she didn't care who the man was.

On the fourth day a terrible storm came. The sky grew black and the ocean came over the deck. Sailors started running everywhere, fastening this and fastening that and giving orders. Us poor people had to go below and that little door to the deck was fastened down. We had no light and no air and everyone got sick where we were. We were like rats trapped in a hole, holding onto the posts and onto the



iron frames to keep from rolling around. Why had I worried about Santino? We were never going to come to America after all! We were going to the bottom of the sea!

But after three days the ship stopped rolling. That door to the deck was opened and some sailors came down and carried out two who had died and others too sick to walk. Me and all my *paesani* climbed out without help and stood in line at the wash-house, breathing fresh air and filling our basins with water. Then we were out on the narrow deck washing ourselves and our clothes — some of us women and girls standing like a wall around the others so the men couldn't see us.

Another time there was fog — so much fog that we couldn't see the masts and we couldn't see the ocean. The engine stopped and the sails were tied down and a horn that shook the whole boat started blowing. All day and all night that horn was blowing. No one could sleep so no one went to bed. One man had a concertina and the ones who knew how to dance were dancing to entertain the others. Me, I was the best one. There was no one there to scold me and tell me what to do so I danced with all my *paesani* who knew how. Then I even danced with some of the Polish and the French. We were like floating on a cloud in the middle of nowhere and when I was dancing I forgot for a little while that I was the wife of Santino going to him in America. But on the third day the fog left, the sails came out, the engine started, and the ship was going again.

Sometimes when I was walking on the steerage deck with Giorgio — the little boy of one woman from Bugiaro who was all-the-way seasick — I would look back and see the rich people sitting on the higher decks with nice awnings to protect them from the cinders and the sun, and I would listen to their strange languages and their laughing. The rich always knew where they were going and what they were going to do. The rich didn't have to be afraid like us poor.

Then one day we could see land! Me and my *paesani* stood and watched the hills and the land come nearer. Other poor people, dressed in their best clothes and loaded down with bundles, crowded around. *America!* The country where everyone could find work! Where wages were so high no one had to go hungry! Where all men were free and equal and where even the poor could own land! But

now we were so near it seemed too much to believe. Everyone stood silent — like in prayer. Big sea gulls landed on the deck and screamed and flew away.

Then we were entering the harbor. The land came so near we could almost reach out and touch it. "Look!" said one of the *paesani*. "Green grass and green trees and white sand — just like in the old country!" The others all laughed — loud, not regular laughs — so that Pep wouldn't know that they too had expected things to be different. When we came through that narrow place and into the real harbor everyone was holding their breath. Me too. There were boats going everywhere — all sizes and all kinds. There were smoke chimneys smoking and white sails and flags waving and new paint shining. Some boats had bands playing on their decks and all of them were tooting their horns to us and leaving white trails in the water behind them.

"There!" said Pep, raising his hand in a greeting. "There it is! *New York!*"

The tall buildings crowding down to the water looked like the cardboard scenery we had in our plays at the *istituto*.

"Oh I'm so scared!" said Emilia again. "How can I know that man I am going to marry? And what if he doesn't meet me?"

Us other women and girls were going to meet our husbands, or the men to marry, in the iron mine in Missouri. Only the man to marry Emilia lived in New York and was meeting her here. He didn't work in the mines. He played a trumpet and had his own band.

"Look," said Pep. "Brooklyn Bridge! Just opened this year with fireworks and everything."

"And there's Castle Garden."

"Castle Garden! Which? Which is Castle Garden?"

Castle Garden! Castle Garden was the gate to the new land.

Everyone wanted to see. But the ship was being pulled off to one side — away from the strange round building.

"Don't get scared," said Pep. "We go just to the pier up the river. Then a government boat brings us back."

Doctors had come on the ship and ordered us inside to examine our eyes and our vaccinations. One old man who couldn't talk and two girls with sore eyes were being sent back to the old country. "O

Madonna, make them send me back too!" I prayed. "Don't make me go to Santino!"

About two hours later me and my *paesani* were back at Castle Garden on a government boat, bumping the dock and following Pep across a boardwalk and leaving our bundles with some officers. I wanted to hold onto my bottles of oil — they might get broken — but the officers made me leave those too. Then one by one we went through a narrow door into Castle Garden. The inside was a big, dark room full of dust, with fingers of light coming down from the ceiling. That room was already crowded with poor people from earlier boats sitting on benches and on railings and on the floor. And to one side were a few old tables where food was being sold. Down the center between two railings high-up men were sitting on stools at high desks. And we had to walk in line between those two railings and pass them.

"What is your name? Where do you come from? Where are you going?"

Those men knew all the languages and could tell just by looking what country we come from.

After Pep, it was my turn.

"Cristoforo, Rosa. From Lombardy. To the iron mine in Missouri." Emilia was holding me by the skirt, so I stayed a little behind to help her. "Gruffiano, Emilia. From San Paola. What *signore*? You don't know San Paola?"

"She's from Lombardy too," I said. "But she's going to stay in New York."

"And do you know the man I am going to marry, *signore*?" asked Emilia. "See, here's his picture. He has to meet me in Castle Garden. But how can I know him? He plays the *tromba* and owns his own band."

"Get your baggage and come back. Wait by the visitors' door — there at the left. Your name will be called. All right. Move on!"

There were two other desks — one for railroad tickets and one for American money — but we *Lombardi* had ours already so we went back for our bundles. But I couldn't find my straw-covered bottles. Everybody was trying to help me find them. Then an inspector man came. "What's all the commotion?" he asked. "Oh, so those bottles

belonged to her? Well ask her," he said to the interpreter. "Ask her what that stuff was? Was it poison?"

When Pep told him he said, "Well tell her her bottles are in the bottom of the ocean! Tell her that's what she gets for bringing such nasty stuff into America! It made us all sick!"

My *paesani* looked at their feet or at the ground and hurried back into the building. Then they busted out laughing. That was a good one! That was really a good one! And even I had to laugh. I was brokenhearted to lose my good oil but it was funny anyway — how Mamma Lena's nice wine bottles had fooled those men in gold braid.

We *Lombardi* put down our bundles and sat on the floor near the visitors' door. At last after all the new immigrants had been checked, an officer at the door started calling the names. "Gruffiano, Emilia" was the first one.

"*Presente! Presente!*" shouted Pep jumping to his feet and waving his hands. But Emilia was so scared I had to pull her up and drag her along after him.

At the door the officer called the name again and let us pass. Then here came up a young man. He was dressed — O Madonna! — like the president of the United States! White gloves and a cane and a diamond pin in his tie. Emilia tried to run away but Pep pulled her back. "*Non è vero! Non è vero!* It's not true!" she kept saying.

"But it is true!" the young man laughed. "Look at me, Emilia! Don't you remember Carlo who used to play the *tromba* in San Paola when you were a little girl?" And he pulled her out from behind us and took her in his arms and kissed her. (In America a man can kiss the girl he is going to marry!) "But I never thought you would come like this," he said, holding her off a little and looking at her handkerchief and full skirt. "I'm afraid to look. Did you come in the wooden soles too?"

"No," said Emilia, speaking to him for the first time. "My mother bought me real shoes to come to America!" And she was lifting her feet to show him.

"She looks just the same as when she was seven years old," the young man said to Pep, and he was happy and laughing. "But I'm

going to take her up Broad Street and buy her some American clothes before I take her home."

I was glad for Emilia that she was going to marry that nice young man, but why couldn't something like this ever happen to me?

Other visitors were called. Some families separated at Havre found each other again and were happy. But that nice young French girl, she was there all alone — nobody could find her mother and her sister. I don't think they ever found each other again.

When the gate was opened men wearing badges came running in, going to the different people. One dressed-up man with a cane and waxed mustache came to us. "*Buon giorno, paesani! Benvenuto!* Welcome to America! Welcome to the new country!" He was speaking Italian and English too and putting out his hand to shake hands with Pep. We other *paesani* looked on in wonder. A high man like that shaking hands with the poor! This was America for sure!

"I heard your talk and knew you were my *paesani*. I came to help you. You have the railroad tickets and the American money?"

"*Si, signore,*" said Pep and we all showed our tickets and our money.

Then Pep asked about the women's chests that had come on an earlier ship. "Leave it to me," said our new friend. "Leave it to me, your *paesano*, Bartini. I will find them and send them to Union. And in three days when your train goes I will put you on myself so you won't go wrong."

"Three days! But no, *signore!* We want to go today."

"My dear man," laughed Bartini, "you're lucky I found you. There's no train to Missouri for three days. But don't worry! Bartini will take care of everything. You can come and eat and sleep in my hotel, comfortable and nice, and in three days I will take you and put you on the right train."

And in three days he did put us on the train but he took all our money first, about thirteen dollars each one. He left us not even a crust of bread for our journey. And we didn't even guess that he was fooling us.

The American people on the train were sorry when they saw we had nothing to eat and they were trying to give us some of their

food. But Pep said no. He was too proud to take it. Me, I would have taken it quick enough. But I couldn't after Pep said no — even with that little Giorgio crying with his face in my lap. Those American people were dressed up nice — the ladies had hats and everything — but they were riding the same class with us poor — all equal and free together.

"Look, Giorgio," I said, to make him forget his pains. "Horses and cows just like in *Italia*. But here there are no shepherds to watch every blade of grass they eat. Here they can go all around and eat what they want."

At last we were in the station in St. Louis changing trains for Union. We were sick for food but everyone was awake now — everyone excited. Domiana could scarcely wait to see her husband, Masino. And Francesca — "Crazy Francesca" — was trying to find out from Pep what kind of a man was waiting to marry her. All the *paesani* were laughing, but not me. Me, I was hiding my rosary in my hand and kissing the cross and trembling inside. "O Madonna, I prayed, 'You've got to help me! That man is my husband — I must do what he wants, to not offend God and offend You! But You've got to help me!'"

Then the conductor was calling, "Union! Union!" And everybody was picking up bundles and pushing to the windows. There was a little wooden station ahead and beside it were all our *paesani* from the iron mine with two wagons with horses to meet us.

"Look, Rosa, the one with white teeth and black mustache, he's my cousin, Gionin. I think the young man beside him is the one I'm going to marry!"

"He looks nice, Francesca," I said.

I thought maybe Santino didn't come, or maybe I'd forgotten what he looked like. But then I saw him — a little back from the others — just as I remembered him.

Pep, a bundle on his back, was getting off first — laughing and excited — proud that he had brought us new *paesani* all the way from the old country.

"*Benvenuto, Pep! Benvenuto, paesani! Benvenuto! But Gesu Maria! Why those three days doing nothing in New York?*"

"Bartini said there were no trains for three days."



"No trains for three days! There come two trains every day to Missouri. Wait till we can get our hands on Bartini! But forget it now. Now we are all together. Just a little ride through the woods and you are in your new home. And in camp there is plenty to eat. Can a girl as beautiful as Rosa help cook it?"

It was like a *fiesta*. Everybody in their best clothes and everybody talking and laughing.

Francesca's cousin Gionin was introducing Francesca to the man she was going to marry, but they didn't know what to say. They just stood there getting red and red. Masino, the husband of Domiana, was laughing and crying at the same time, hugging Domiana, then taking Giorgio in his arms and kissing him. Without looking I could see Santino still back at one side eying me with his half-closed eyes. He did not come to me and I did not go to him. Instead I stood there talking and laughing with the *paesani* who had come to meet us — mostly young men I had known in Bugiarino. Twelve of them were going to eat in my house. I was to cook for them. "But I don't know how to cook!"

"Per l'amore di Dio, don't worry about that. We will teach you!" "Watch close the way we are going, Rosa." It was Gionin, the cousin of Francesca. He was sitting next to me on the wagon. "You will be walking back here every two or three days to get groceries and ask for mail." He was not *Lombardo* like the others — he and his friend were *Toscani*. I had to listen careful to understand his words. But his talk sounded nice and so respectful. "Here in America they have the courthouse and the jail on the square, in place of a church."

The old *paesani* were all asking questions at once of the new ones. They wanted to know about this one and that one and all that had happened in Bugiarino since they went away. Only Santino said nothing. I could see him out of the corner of my eye sitting up near the driver watching me. But somehow I was not so afraid with Gionin beside me. And Gionin was one of the twelve going to eat in my house.

After two or three miles the wagons came out from the woods and there, below, was the iron mine and the camp. Down there there were no trees and no grass — just some shacks made of boards and some railroad tracks. The sun was going down behind the hills and a few

miners with picks and sledgehammers were coming out from a tunnel. Other men down in an open place were wheeling away their tools in wheelbarrows. The new *paesani* grew silent — as if they had expected something else — as if they were no longer sure they were going to be millionaires. And me, looking up to see which shack Gionin was pointing to, met the eyes of Santino.